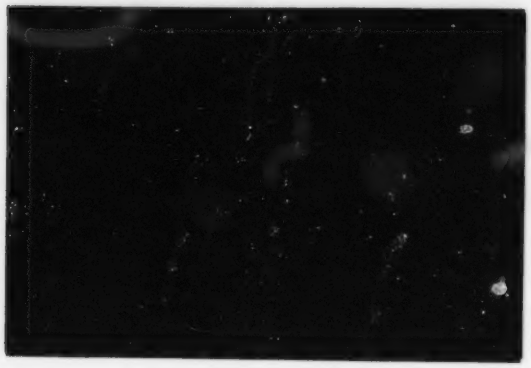
FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION



SHORT TERM CRISIS ACCOMMODATION PROJECTS: ISSUES TO CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING SAFE HOME NETWORKS AND SATELLITE ACCOMMODATION PROJECTS

Office for the Prevention of
Family Violence
Alberta Social Services
October, 1988

89-05192/

This paper does not reflect any particular policy position of the government of Alberta but rather is intended to be a vehicle for information and discussion.

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INTRODUCTION

One out of every eight Canadian women suffers abuse at the hands of their intimate partners.[1] Wife abuse may take the form of ongoing or repeated physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, verbal abuse, economic abuse and violence or threats of violence against a women's children, other relatives, friends, pets or cherished possessions.

Governments and communities are becoming more and more concerned about this widespread social problem and are considering ways of responding by providing various forms of assistance to families affected by violence. Traditionally, the response to this need has been met with the establishment of a shelter for battered women and their children. However, for many isolated communities or thinly populated areas, a shelter is often not a feasible solution. In addition, other concerns arise such as transportation difficulties, resource limitations and client anonymity. Some communities have developed creative responses to these challenges by developing safe home networks or satellites to provide emergency shelter to women and children in crisis, or transportation networks to assist individuals to leave their home. Still others have established crisis lines providing supportive counselling, information and referral to victims.

Communities have also begun to examine the need for prevention and support measures to prevent violence from occurring and, where it has occurred, to

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1 Fact Sheet on Wife Battering. Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Ottawa (to be released in 1989).

provide supportive and rehabilitative services to enable victims to overcome their abuse in the long term. Some communities, for example, have pursued a program of awareness in schools as a preventative measure. Others have embarked on a public education program to inform the public about wife abuse and change societal attitudes which support violence in families. Support, information, referral services, advocacy and information about legal options have been offered through advocacy clinics or other means for women not seeking the emergency accommodation services typically offered by shelters.

Responses to the problem of wife abuse will vary from community to community depending upon a variety of factors including, for example:

- the nature and extent of resources currently available in the community and in neighbouring areas to meet identified needs

- the level of awareness and understanding of the problem on the part of the general public and professionals who may provide services

- the current needs of abused women and their families

- the level of financial and other resources (e.g. volunteers) which can be made available to support initiatives

- the willingness of individuals and organizations to work cooperatively to provide a coordinated and comprehensive response

Because communities are at different stages of development, the nature and extent of services or resources available will vary, as will the level of community awareness and understanding of the problem. It is important that each community consider these factors before identifying their own unique response to the problem.

This paper focuses on two particular approaches to providing crisis accommodation and support services to abused women and their children - safe homes and satellites. A discussion of the relative merits of each is given based on the ability of the program to meet the diverse needs of abused women. Because these two approaches have been primarily used as a response to the problem of wife abuse in rural areas, the unique needs of abused rural women will be examined. The paper then proceeds to suggest a number of possible service components to these program models and discusses issues to consider when developing such short term crisis accommodation projects. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for a comprehensive array of services to meet the needs of abused women, regardless of the program model chosen to provide the service.

The issues discussed in this report are not unique to satellite and safe home programs, but are relevant to the development of other services to assist abused women such as crisis lines, support networks, advocacy clinics, counselling services and others. By reviewing this report, readers should have an understanding of the needs of abused women, particularly in rural areas, and an idea of the possible service components of any program designed to assist battered women and be able to determine measures their community can take in responding to this serious social problem.

I. CRISIS ACCOMMODATION PROJECTS FOR ABUSED WOMEN

There are two main approaches to providing crisis accommodation to abused women and their children. The most common is in the form of emergency shelters, the other alternative is short term accommodation in the form of safe home networks or satellite accommodation projects.

1. Shelters

Shelters (or transition houses, as they are called in other provinces) provide a full complement of services to abused women and their children and offer crisis accommodation for approximately twenty-one days. Usually situated in urban areas with a large enough population base to ensure a continuous demand for crisis accommodation services, shelters have an expected occupancy of (approximately) 10 to 30 women and children. Shelters are staffed 24 hours, 365 days a year and are, therefore, more costly to operate than some of the alternatives discussed in the following pages. A full range of in-house support services are provided in shelters including: crisis intervention, emotional support, counselling, information, referral, essential transportation, food, accommodation, child care and follow-up services. Shelters operate in communities that have an adequate infra-structure which will support the shelter's services and provide support to women and children once they leave the shelter.

2. Short Term Crisis Accommodation

Safe home networks and satellite accommodation projects offer a different form of crisis accommodation for abused women and their children than do shelters. They provide services and accommodation to abused women and their children for a short period of time, usually one to three days. Safe home networks and satellite accommodation projects are often located in rural communities since these regions may not have sufficient demand or resources to warrant the development of a 24 hour shelter.

Without a safe home network or satellite accommodation project, an abused woman and her children could be forced to undertake an immediate move away from their community to an area with a shelter, or be forced to stay in their community in accommodations such as a motel where adequate support and security are not provided. By providing the alternative of a safe home network or satellite accommodation project, women who are unable to leave abusive situations because of transportation or financial constraints, or because they are intimidated or fearful at the thought of leaving their community, may be able to seek the help they need. After seeking short term crisis accommodation in their community, women and children may move to a shelter in an urban area or return to their own community.

2.1 Safe Home Networks

2.1.1 Safe Homes

Safe homes are private homes offered for a short period of time to women and their children in crisis as a result of violence in the home. The individuals or families operating the safe homes reside there, and periodically offer their homes as temporary shelter to abused women and their children.

2.1.2 Safe Home Networks

A safe home network consists of several safe homes which offer crisis accommodation for a family for a short period of time, usually one to three days. These homes are usually overseen by a project co-ordinator who takes crisis calls, monitors the situation, ensures safe transportation and places abused women and their children in an appropriate safe home. Through the network, support services such as counselling, child care, medical care, victim advocacy, information, referral and follow-up services are co-ordinated.

2.2 Satellite Accommodation Projects

Satellite accommodation projects operate out of safe, secure dwellings such as flats, houses, hostels, apartment units, church basements, offices, or resource centres. Safe emergency accommodation is offered to abused women and their children for a short period of time, usually one to three days. Satellite accommodations operate out of permanent facilities, which are not private homes, but are staffed only when in use. They provide safe accommodation, crisis intervention services, emotional support, essential transportation, and information and referral services. Often these projects provide an array of public education, outreach, and support services to the community as well.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

A useful way to conceptualize safe home networks, as distinct from satellites, may be through the following model.

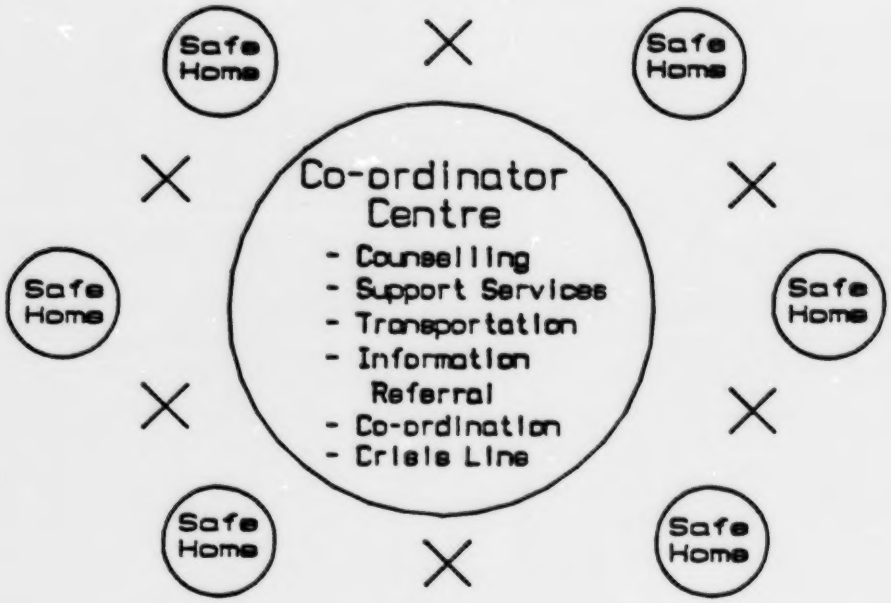
Diagram A shows the relationship between the safe home network coordinator, the safe home operator, and community based services. In this model, the coordinator or the focal point of the network (e.g. crisis centre) may offer any or all of the services enumerated within the centre circle, while referrals are made to existing community resources for

services not offered by the network itself. The safe home operator provides emergency accommodation and support.

Diagram B shows the relationship between the satellite and other community based services. In this model, crisis accommodation, amongst other services, is offered in-house, while services needed by abused women and their families which are not offered by the satellite can be obtained by referral to community resources. Crisis accommodation is but one service the satellite offers.

In both models, the purpose is to ensure that a comprehensive array of services are available to abused women and children, regardless of who provides them or how. Models A and B are just different ways of providing similar services.

DIAGRAM A
Safe Home Network



Safe Home-provides accommodation and emotional support.
X - Community services (e.g.: police, counselling, income assistance, housing, parenting groups, medical, etc.)

DIAGRAM B
Satellite

X - Community services (e.g.: parenting groups, financial assistance, police, medical, legal, treatment for abusers, groups for children, etc.)

II. ABUSED WOMEN IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Although it is difficult to know the true extent of wife abuse in rural communities, violence against women in the home appears to be at least as widespread in rural areas as it does in urban areas.[2] It is believed that the individual, family, social and cultural factors which contribute to violence are the same for both rural and urban areas.[3] These factors include social and family roles, stress, living conditions, alcohol abuse, and the use of force to settle problems.[4]

Battered women are, by definition, isolated - they have few friends or family to turn to for support, often they have limited access to money and are trapped in a cocoon of secrecy.[5] Women and children who seek shelter from violence in their home have tremendous obstacles to overcome in dealing with the violence. In rural areas women may face even greater obstacles to overcome violence than women in urban areas. Rural women

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2 La Prairie, Carol. Family Violence in Northern Communities: A Proposal in Research and Program Development. Solicitor General Canada, Ottawa, 1983, p. 3 and McLaughlin, Audrey. An Analysis of Victims/Victim Witness Needs in Yukon. Department of Justice, Canada and Department of Justice, Yukon, March, 1983.

3 Growing Stronger: Women in Agriculture. Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, November, 1987, p. 33.

4 Breaking the Pattern: How Alberta Communities Can Help Assaulted Women and Their Families. Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, Alberta Social Services, November, 1985.

5 MacLeod, Linda. Battered But Not Beaten: Preventing Wife Abuse in Canada. Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Ottawa, June 1987, p. 22.

may be isolated not only by being battered, but by geographic, linguistic, cultural, racial, physical and mental barriers.

The following section highlights some of the special circumstances of abused women in rural areas.

1. Crisis Services

Due to geographic isolation, abused women in rural areas may not have crisis services such as crisis lines and crisis counselling near to their community. Women's shelters may be too difficult for rural women in crisis to access due to a lack of transportation, high transportation costs, and a prohibitive distance to travel. A rural woman may be reluctant to travel to an urban area where there is a shelter.

2. Housing Alternatives

In rural communities there are often few housing alternatives for abused women and their children. Finding emergency accommodation in hotels, motels, or with family or friends is often not possible or desirable when escaping from an abusive situation as the abused woman's safety and support needs may not be met in these settings. It is difficult for an abused woman to make a new start in her own rural community, since there are few apartments or suites to rent.

3. Services

Services provided by Criminal Justice, Legal Aid, Health and Social Services may not be directly available in an abused woman's community. If they are available, they may be inappropriate for the woman because of close personal ties throughout the community. The abused women or the abuser may be friends with the potential service giver. This lack of anonymity makes it difficult for the abused woman to disclose her abuse for fear of disbelief, retribution, shame or judgments of culpability.

Abused women in rural areas may experience problems with local police who may be ill-informed of provincial policies regarding the laying of criminal charges against the abuser. Information about the prevalence, criminality and prevention of family violence may be slow to disseminate to service providers in rural and isolated communities.

4. Information Services

Research indicates that abused women in rural areas have a greater need for basic information pertaining to wife abuse than do women in urban areas.[6] Rural women need to understand the prevalence and dynamics of wife abuse and need to learn their rights and options.

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6 Battered But Not Beaten. Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Ottawa. June, 1987, p. 22.

When services are advertised and delivered, the unique cultural, linguistic and racial characteristics of the community should be considered. This may mean advertising or providing the service in another language and giving consideration to the culture specific to the community.

5. Homogeneous Communities

Rural communities are often homogeneous, comprised of members with a very strong sense of themselves as part of the community. Community members may place a strong value on maintaining relationships and solving one's own problems. The belief that rural people have a healthy lifestyle is prevalent and leads some community members to believe that abuse does not exist in their community. There may be an even greater stigma against a woman reporting that she was abused and seeking help within their own community as the community may side with the batterer. This strong sense of community may also make it difficult for an abused woman to make a major change by leaving her community and moving to a new community where she does not know anyone.

A strong sense of community may also be advantageous. Once an abuser is identified and charged with a criminal offence, the knowledge of the abuse could spread throughout the community and stigmatize the abuser. Community pride may be used in a positive

way to end abusive situations by providing support to the abused woman and her children.

III. ISSUES TO CONSIDER FOR SHORT TERM CRISIS ACCOMMODATION PROJECTS

There are various models which short term crisis accommodation projects can use. Projects may operate in conjunction with an existing crisis service to offer crisis accommodation, or they may utilize existing community services for most program components, or develop their own program services. The choice of model for a short term accommodation project will depend on community resources.

The basic needs of abused women remain similar across all communities and should be addressed by accommodation projects. The following section provides a discussion of issues which should be considered so that a project may best address the needs of abused women in that community. There is no best way to organize a short term accommodation project, as long as the needs of abused women and their children are addressed by each project.

1. Community Support

In developing a response to the problem of wife abuse, much depends on the willingness of the community to participate in the development of a comprehensive approach. Most communities have some services which already address, or may have the potential to address, some aspects of violence against women in the home. These services may be provided by: police, hospitals, doctors, local health units, church groups, clergy, lawyers, schools, local governments, social service offices, mental health units, family and

community support services, service agencies, native friendship centres, women's groups, community crisis lines and community groups.

Community support is important for a variety of reasons: to heighten awareness of the problem and help to change attitudes which support or condone violent behavior; to encourage accountability of other service providers to ensure the needs of victims are met; to make fundraising efforts successful; and to provide links with the crisis project to other service providers in the community and encourage interagency collaboration.

There are many issues to be considered in determining what community response is most appropriate to address the needs of abused women and their children. Abused women and their children require much more than just crisis accommodation, thus, the choice to develop an accommodation project will depend on the level of existing services, the degree of interagency cooperation and the accessibility of other necessary services.

2. Safety and Security

One of the basic needs of women and their children seeking to escape violence in the home is to find a safe place to stay where they can recuperate from their physical and emotional injuries. Most victims of violence are in a very real danger of escalated or continued abuse after they leave an abusive situation. Leaving the home to

escape the abuse is often perceived as an act of defiance that the abuser may not readily accept and, as a result, the abuser's harassment may continue in the form of death threats or attempts at abducting the children.

The provision of safe accommodation in rural communities will require the development of policies and procedures for satellite accommodations and safe home networks. When developing policies and procedures, the following safety and security concerns should be considered.

2.1 Confidentiality

The names of victims staying in satellite accommodation projects or safe homes should be carefully guarded. Confirmation of the presence of abused women and their children should not be given.

2.2 Unlisted Addresses

The location of safe homes and satellite accommodation projects should not be revealed. The addresses and telephone numbers of safe homes and, if possible, satellite accommodation projects should not be published or shared. As well, to ensure anonymity, safe home networks could rotate the use of their safe homes to ensure the same residences are not used continuously.

2.3 Building Security

Security systems, peep-holes and intercoms are devices which may be used to increase the physical safety of women and children in safe homes and satellite accommodations. Another security measure may be a policy that only operators, staff and/or volunteers answer telephones and doors.

2.4 Notification of Schools

If children are attending school, it may be advisable to notify the school of the family's situation. Children in such situations could be accompanied to and from school.

2.5 Child Play

The play of children out of doors may need to be restricted so as to ensure the safety of children and avoid detection of their whereabouts while at the satellite/safe home.

2.6 Storage of Files

In recognition of clients' rights to privacy, information about victims of abuse must be kept confidential, limiting access to authorized staff only. Exceptions to this include information pertaining to suspected cases of child abuse in which case every individual is legally obligated to report

their concerns to child welfare staff at the nearest District Office of Alberta Social Services.

2.7 Transportation

The transportation of women and children to safe homes, satellite accommodation projects or to other services should be done as discretely as possible. Some programs with volunteer transportation networks make arrangements to change cars to prevent easy identification. If the woman drives her own car to the safe home or satellite accommodation project, it should be hidden from sight.

If women continue working while residing in crisis accommodations, measures should be taken to ensure they are not followed to and from work.

Police may also be able to provide assistance in some circumstances.

2.8 Telephone Lines

Often in rural and isolated areas, telephones are on a party line. This makes it difficult for a woman to place a call for help without being overheard by someone in the community. As well, it makes it very difficult to have telephone

conversations with or about the victim who is residing in a safe home or satellite accommodation project.

Because of potential technical difficulties, groups wishing to establish crisis lines for their service are advised to consult with their local telephone office regarding their options.

2.9 Volunteers and Staff

Careful screening and training of volunteers and staff is necessary to ensure the recruitment of non-judgmental workers who are aware of the need for safety and protection of client confidentiality. This will help to ensure the identity of the victim and location of the crisis accommodations are not revealed.

2.10 Formal Agreement

It may be desirable for victims, safe home operators and workers to take an oath of confidentiality promising not to reveal the location of the crisis accommodations nor the identity of residents.

2.11 Relationship With Police

Working with the local police may be the best way to ensure the safety and security of abused women and their children. A good working relationship with police may help to ensure a prompt response to an emergency situation for women in crisis in their homes and for safe home/satellite operations. Routine police patrols may be used to maintain security of the safe homes or satellite accommodation centres. The police may also undertake surveillance of the abuser to determine his whereabouts.

In some areas, police are available to escort women in crisis from abusive situations to short term crisis accommodation projects. As police may be the first contact person an abused woman has, the officers may inform an abused woman of the availability of crisis accommodation and, at her request, may take her to the crisis accommodation or arrange for transportation for her.

Some problems may be encountered if a woman in an abusive situation resides in an area which does not have a police officer nearby. Quick responses by policy during emergencies may not always be feasible in rural areas and other arrangements for emergency transportation may be necessary (such as volunteer transportation networks). Nevertheless, it is important to develop a co-operative relationship with

police in the area to ensure women in crisis are provided with the appropriate assistance and information, and to provide protection to women and children, safe home/satellite operators and staff, and volunteers.

3. Funding

3.1 Expenses

Funds will be required to cover various operating expenses incurred by a short term crisis accommodation project. Costs that may need to be covered include: telephone and long distance charges, office supplies, publicity costs, facility rental, transportation costs, necessities such as clothes and diapers, medical supplies, and food, training for staff and volunteers, resource material, salaries and benefits.

A safe home network may wish to reimburse safe home operators for the expenses they incur as a result of housing an abused woman and her children. Networks may also provide retainer fees to safe home operators. Volunteers may be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses incurred while transporting women and children to safety.

3.2 Community Resources

Community fundraising often accounts for much of the financial support for safe home networks and satellite accommodation projects. Individuals or groups planning to organize accommodation projects need to be prepared to devote considerable time and energy to fundraising events and to soliciting donations from churches, large corporations, local businesses, community organizations, governments and individuals.

To detect gaps in service, avoid duplication of resources, and minimize expenditures, an evaluation of existing resources and the development of strategies for accessing these resources will be necessary. Various services which already function within the community may be utilized as a component of a short term crisis accommodation project. The establishment of information sharing networks with related agencies should be investigated.

3.3 Government Funding

Some financial assistance may be available for abused women and their children through Alberta Social Services or the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Canada. Groups could contact local offices of the two departments for further information.

The Provincial and Federal governments have various employment programs which provide funds for temporary staff. Grants from the Provincial or Federal government may be available for the development of specific programs or services which meet an identified community need. As well, local governments may have some funds available for local projects through Family and Community Support Services or municipal grants. It should be noted that often government funds are not available on a continuous basis, and thus, the community must maintain the funding base for the program.

4. Crisis Contact

Public knowledge as to the availability of crisis services for abused women is essential to ensure easy access to these services. In order for an abused woman to seek help, she must be aware of a crisis contact point within her community. There should be links between the short term crisis accommodation service for abused women and contact points such as: doctors, hospitals, police, and community workers.

Various models can be employed to provide a crisis contact point for women. The choice of model will depend upon the existing resources and links within the community. These models may include:

4.1 A sponsoring body, such as a women's resource centre or a drop-in centre, which has a professional or volunteer staff

available to answer crisis calls may act as a crisis contact point. Women requiring short term crisis accommodation could then be referred to the co-ordinator or worker for the safe home network or satellite accommodation project.

4.2 Call forwarding and telephone answering services can be the crisis contact point. Women in crisis would have to be aware of a telephone number they could call which would put them in contact with a co-ordinator or worker for the short term crisis accommodation project.

4.3 Key contact points such as police or hospitals may be used by abused women. After women contact police, hospitals, doctors or other community workers they may be referred to a contact person for the short term accommodation project. It should be noted that some women may be reluctant to utilize these contacts as they may be unable to maintain their anonymity.

4.4 A crisis line based in a sponsoring agency whose main goal is not short term crisis accommodation may be a crisis contact point for abused women. Crisis lines such as suicide help lines, information lines, sexual assault lines may refer abused women to a contact person for a short term accommodation project.

4.5 A crisis line operated by the accommodation project is another model for a crisis contact point. Good links with community

services can be maintained if the crisis line is operated by the accommodation project. However, demand is often not high enough to warrant a crisis line exclusively for a short term accommodation project.

5. Telephone Lines

Most crisis contact points utilize telephone lines as the initial source of contact between a woman in an abusive situation and crisis support services. When utilizing telephone lines as crisis contact points the use of party lines should be avoided. Women should feel free to call during a crisis and not fear that her batterer or other members of the community will overhear her call. As well, toll-free telephone lines may be desirable since the woman will not have to pay for charges or provide an explanation to the abuser for long-distance telephone calls to crisis contact points.

6. Public Education/Program Promotion

Existing safe home networks and satellite accommodation projects have found it beneficial to initiate public education projects to help the community understand the prevalence, dynamics and prevention of family violence. Several projects have reported an improvement in their community's awareness of family violence. This has in turn improved the community's ability to deliver services to victims of family violence. When abused women, their friends, their

families, community workers and the general public are aware of family violence, then more abused women can seek help.[7]

Public education may, or may not, be a formal component of the crisis accommodation project. It may include: sponsoring workshops and seminars, and utilizing guest speakers to educate community workers, volunteers and the general public about family violence and about the services that are available in the community. Members of public education committees may participate in workshops and seminars in order to increase their own skills in dealing with family violence in their communities.

As part of the effort to educate the community about family violence, resources such as newsletters, audio tapes, video tapes, pamphlets, books, articles and information kits may be borrowed or obtained for the establishment of a community family violence resource centre. Resource centres serve a dual purpose in that they work toward educating the community and providing a drop-in centre where individuals can discuss problems of family violence. Resource centres are often the crisis contact point for battered women. Some offer emergency accommodation as one component of their program.

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[7] Refer to: Breaking the Silence: How Alberta Communities Can Help Assaulted Women and Their Families. Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, Alberta Social Services, November 1985.

7. Assessment

After abused women make contact with a representative of a short term crisis accommodation project, it will be necessary to assess and then place abused women and their children in appropriate accommodation. A co-ordinator or designated staff person should assess the seriousness of the situation to determine if the woman and her children need to be immediately removed from their home. Arrangements to remove the woman could be made in conjunction with the police or other volunteers.

7.1 Assessment as to Lethality

After a woman and her children have been assisted to leave their home, the co-ordinator of the crisis accommodation project can further assess the situation and determine the needs of the woman and her children. If the situation is severe and there is a real threat to the woman's life, then a decision may be made to move the woman to a safe place in another community. This may mean transporting a woman and her children to the nearest woman's shelter where there is a greater chance of maintaining the woman's anonymity and personal safety. Keeping a woman in a situation with a high degree of lethality not only endangers the woman and her children but also endangers all those in the community involved with the crisis accommodation services. This is

particularly relevant for safe homes where the host families may be endangered.

7.2 Other Placement Options

Most short term crisis accommodation projects have found it useful to question women in crisis as to the availability of personal support from their friends or family within their community or in other communities. If there is a location which a woman would prefer for crisis accommodation, then transportation to that location should be arranged and information regarding services and contacts that may be of value to her in that location could be provided. Once all other options for crisis accommodation have been discussed and rejected, arrangements should be made for temporary shelter within the community.

7.3 Special Needs Placement

When placing an abused woman and her children in crisis accommodations, a co-ordinator may wish to consider special needs of the family. The number and ages of children may limit accommodation options, not all projects can house babies, numerous children, or sick children. A woman's ethnic background, culture and language should also be considered when deciding what are appropriate accommodations.

7.4 Placement Terms

Co-ordinators or program workers may wish to inform women and their children as to what to expect in terms of accommodations and services. The maximum and expected length of stay may need to be discussed. Often short term accommodation projects have a maximum length of stay of one to three days. In special circumstances, women and children may need to stay longer.

Most short term accommodation projects establish rules which a woman and her children must adhere to. These rules should be made known to the woman and her children before they are provided accommodation.*

8. Terms of Accommodation

During the assessment, the co-ordinator or project worker, with the consent of the abused woman, may wish to gather information about the woman and her family for the purpose of confidential program files, government statistics and applications for financial assistance.

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* Rules may pertain to: maintaining the confidentiality of telephone numbers and addresses, prohibiting guests, telephone calls, alcohol consumption and smoking, requiring daily assistance in household chores, etc.

Basic intake information would include the woman's name, address, marital status, the names and ages of her children, an emergency contact, medical information and doctor's name, special dietary or other needs, and the date of intake and date of departure.

Information about cash on hand, income sources, employment income and social assistance may be required when applying for financial assistance.

Observations may also be added to confidential personal files on: number of previous visits to a crisis accommodations, the type of abuse, frequency/severity of abuse, incidents of child abuse, legal situation (charges laid, restraining orders, court appearances, etc.), involvement of police, use of professional or community support systems, referrals, departure information and other follow-up services. The purpose of information gathering is, ultimately, to provide service to clients: to assist in assessment, the provision of information and referral services, and to provide options to facilitate decision-making by the abused woman about her future.

9. Transportation

Often the quick removal of women and children from their home is essential. This means that a transportation network consisting of vehicles, drivers and escorts may be necessary. Whether operated by the police, staff or volunteers, the network should be established

to span the area which the crisis accommodation project aims to serve. Transportation may be provided to a neutral location where a woman and her children can meet with the coordinator or a volunteer worker. Women and their children can then be transported to the crisis accommodation project.

Women and their children may require transportation to medical services, the police, courts or other community services during their stay in crisis accommodations. Upon departing, women and their children may also need transportation to a new residence, a women's shelter, or back to their own home.

10. Information and Referral Services

After they leave their violent home, women require information and referral services. They need information about the dynamics of wife abuse, about their legal rights, about their options and about the availability of services. This information can be provided at various stages during their stay in crisis accommodations. It can be provided: during the initial contact, during the assessment interview or during counselling. Abused women may desire information and referral services both prior to and after using crisis accommodation services.

Project workers, volunteers and community workers may provide information and referral services. Resource centres can be a place where women can independently seek information about wife abuse.

It will be necessary for short term accommodation project volunteers and staff to be knowledgeable about the dynamics of wife abuse and the availability of services for abused women in the community.

11. Counselling

11.1 Emotional Support

One of the most important requirements women and children will have upon leaving a violent situation is for emotional support. Women will need to meet with supportive, non-judgemental counsellors who are knowledgeable about the dynamics of wife abuse. Peer counsellors are often utilized for this type of emotional support. It is often preferable that the peer councillors be women, so as to enable the victim to talk more freely.

11.2 Support Groups

It is often very useful for the victim to receive support from other women in similar situations. This may be in the form of an organized group or informally through the crisis accommodation project. By encountering other women from abusive situations, an abused woman can more readily accept that she is not to blame for the abuse she has suffered, that there are various alternatives to the abuse, and that she is not the only one who has had this experience thereby reducing

her isolation. Formal support groups may operate as part of the crisis accommodation project or they may exist in the community, sponsored by a particular service group or organization. These groups work to provide ongoing support to women who are, or were, victims of violence in the home. Groups can help to rebuild a battered woman's self-esteem and life skills.

11.3 Professional Counselling

Abused women may also wish to utilize professional counselling, either during or following the period of crisis accommodation. If adequate counselling services are not available in a woman's own community, she may leave her community or return to the abusive situation.

11.4 Follow-Up Services

Women that have utilized crisis accommodations may benefit from follow-up services provided by the project or offered within the community. Regardless of the decision a woman makes about her future she may require future support. Follow-up support may be in the form of one-on-one meetings in the woman's home or neutral place, support groups, socials or other such meetings with the victims and service providers.

11.5 Counselling for Children

Children of abused women need special care during their stay in short term crisis accommodations. The children may be victims of abuse as well and should be observed for signs which might indicate abuse. Accommodation projects might consider having a child care worker to relieve the mother from looking after her children and to give particular attention to the emotional needs of children. Children from violent homes may have various behavioral problems. They may require professional counselling and support after leaving the project. Groups for children may by an option.

11.6 Counselling for Batterers

An accommodation project may succeed in making the batterer aware that he has a problem. The batterer may voluntarily request, or by court order, seek treatment. Some form of treatment, whether in the form of groups for abusers or individual professional counselling should be available for men who batter within the community.

12. Co-ordination of Service Delivery

Safe home networks and satellite accommodation projects can be managed by a single co-ordinator (paid or unpaid) or a team of knowledgeable people, consisting of staff, volunteers or a Board of

Directors. It is important that a knowledgeable person always be available to co-ordinate the delivery of services when crisis accommodation is required. Service delivery will likely include: a crisis contact point, an initial meeting with the abused woman and her children, arrangements for transportation, arrangements for safe short term crisis accommodation, co-ordination of counselling and other project services, co-ordination of community services and co-ordination of follow-up services.

Whether a paid co-ordinator or a volunteer board is used to co-ordinate the project, the responsibilities of the "co-ordinator" will likely include some or all of the following:

- overseeing the public education/program promotion.

- liaising with the community, government and other accommodation projects.

- providing some counselling, referral, advocacy and follow-up services.

- recruiting, selecting and training volunteers.

- hiring, training and supervising staff.

- performing administrative functions including the collection of program data and budgeting.

- ensuring that individual safe homes and the Satellite Accommodation Centre have the necessary liability insurance and security measures.

- developing and maintaining a philosophy and mandate for the project.

13. Staff

To ensure that qualified, trained workers are available when needed, many accommodation projects prefer to utilize a paid staff. By having staff available, the project co-ordinator can better ensure the immediate delivery of services required by the victim. Providing a staff complement will usually necessitate additional funding for the project. If funding is for a short time only, staff positions may be of a temporary nature which may attract more inexperienced workers. Good training programs may compensate for this.

14. Volunteers

Volunteerism is essential to the operational success of a short term crisis accommodation project. By utilizing volunteers, the program can be enriched and in turn the volunteers can be rewarded for their involvement.

Depending on the staff component and the availability of professionals in the community, the need for volunteer participation in the project may vary. Volunteers may be involved in service delivery by: providing transportation, answering crisis calls, offering peer support, providing information and referral services, providing child care and doing housekeeping. Volunteers may also be members of a board or committee which oversees the program. They may be involved in fund raising, programming, budgeting, public education, program promotion and liaison with other community agencies.

Program co-ordinators may have some concerns when relying on volunteer services since volunteers may have varying levels of commitment and may often have personal time constraints which interfere in the delivery of crisis services. Because of this, volunteers may be reluctant to undergo training on basic counselling skills and may not wish to attend educational conferences and seminars.

15. Volunteer Screening

Screening volunteers (and staff) is an important process in the operation of short term accommodation projects. Volunteers will need to be sensitive to the psychological and physical needs of abused women. They also should be sensitive to children's needs and be able to identify potential or actual cases of child abuse or

neglect. It is also important that they understand the philosophy and mandate of the program.

Most safe home networks and satellite accommodation projects have developed their own criteria for volunteer recruitment and training. Many accommodation projects prefer to recruit only women volunteers to offer peer support to victims. It is preferable that a volunteer or staff person is not personally involved in an abusive relationship. If she has experienced abuse, she should be free of the relationship for several yeas before she can offer support to other women in crisis. Other requirements for volunteers could pertain to their availability during emergencies, their knowledge about the cycle of violence, their willingness to undergo training, their non-judgemental attitude and other personality characteristics which are relevant to their volunteer position.

Responsibilities of volunteers in safe home networks and satellite accommodation projects may differ since the form of service delivery often differs. Safe home operators are also volunteers but since their role is distinct to safe home networks, it will be discussed in the following section pertaining to safe home networks.

IV. SHORT TERM ACCOMMODATION PROJECT OPTIONS

The choice of developing a safe home network or satellite accommodation project will depend on the community. Both types of projects have the potential to address all of the issues discussed on the proceeding pages providing the projects make the necessary arrangements to ensure the needs of abused women and their children are met.

The following section provides a discussion of some of the areas which must be given special consideration by safe home networks and satellite accommodation projects.

1. Safe Home Networks

Safe home networks may provide a wide array of services in addition to safe accommodation provided in a safe home operator's home. All of the needs and services discussed on the preceding pages may be offered through a safe home network. Much will depend on the community support and the co-ordination of the project. Since the role of a safe home operator has traditionally not included counselling and support services, these needs may be met by transporting a woman and her children to a neutral location where they can receive support services.

1.1 Role of the Safe Home Operator

Safe home operators offer their homes, placing themselves and their families somewhat at risk when they take in abused women and their children. Maintaining the security of a safe home depends on the co-ordination of a safe transportation system and assessment of women and children before they arrive at a safe home. A safe home operator and all members of their family must adhere to the confidentiality and security restrictions required of them.

The role of the safe home operator merits careful examination. Typically, the role of operators has been to provide a safe comfortable environment, emotional support, and empathy. They are not usually expected to provide counselling, and indeed, if not trained to do so, this could be detrimental to the abused woman. Roles of paid staff and volunteers need to be well defined and appropriate to the service.

1.2 Availability of Safe Homes

Although safe home operators offer their homes when it is convenient for them to do so, they experience time constraints and a lack of privacy. While offering safe haven to women and children, the safe home operator's ability to carry on a social life is greatly restricted. At times, especially during holiday seasons, few safe homes are available for

emergency situations due to the operator's social or family commitments.

1.3 Support Services for Abused Women in Safe Homes

Some concerns have been raised about the support abused women and their children receive in safe homes. Since counselling services are not usually provided in the safe home by the operator, women and their children may feel they are isolated and lack support in dealing with their problems. A woman may feel that she and the children are intruders in the operator's home. She may also feel that she is an inadequate mother and wife compared to the seemingly ideal safe home operator.

1.4 Support Services for Children in Safe Home Networks

The battered woman's children also need special attention, since they may feel confused and confined in the safe home and may exhibit acting-out behavior. The children may require the services of babysitters, childcare workers or counsellors.

1.5 Selection of Safe Home Operators

Safe home operators are selected based not only on the accessibility and applicability of their home as a safe accommodation, but on their and their family's ability to provide non-judgemental, non-directive emotional support,

companionship and a friendly ear to women in need. By maintaining communications with the safe home network coordinator, the safe home operator can be assured that the other support needs of women and children will be met through other aspects of the safe home network.

1.6 Safe Home Network Transportation

Some networks transport women back and forth to the safe home and a neutral location, such as a resource centre, where they can receive support services. This provides relief to safe home operators and ensures that the women's and children's needs are being met. This approach may be problematic when a safe home is not within close proximity to the support services.

1.7 Role of the Safe Home Network Co-ordinator

The network coordinator will likely be responsible for ensuring that safe home operators are screened and trained as required. It will be necessary to maintain contact with all potential safe home operators to ensure interest and applicability. The co-ordinator may work to place women and children in safe homes, after considering the personalities of all parties involved. The safe home operator may be responsible for providing accommodation, food and companionship, while the co-ordinator may oversee that

security and support needs are met in the community. Other responsibilities of the co-ordinator could be similar to that of other short term crisis accommodation project co-ordinators described earlier.

2. Satellite Accommodation Projects

Satellite accommodation projects may provide a wide range of services for abused women and their children. They may develop their own services or may use existing community services. Often satellite projects operate out of, or in conjunction with, a resource centre or crisis centre and share staff and resources. Because women and children reside in a permanent facility, which may have staff and resources, they may receive in-house counselling, emotional support, child care and follow-up services.

Some of the particular issues to be considered when developing satellite accommodation projects are discussed below:

2.1 Security

Maintaining security may be more difficult in satellite accommodation projects since the project location is often common knowledge in the community. It may be necessary to utilize police patrols and special security devices.

However, sheltering abused women in existing facilities, rather than private homes does not place another host family at risk.

Existing facilities usually have the advantage of being located in a town or more central location, and often in closer proximity to police, while homes may be scattered throughout rural areas.

2.2 Facilities

Some satellite projects may utilize facilities which are not designed as residences. Particular attention should be given to make abused women and their children comfortable. Beds, cribs, toiletries, food, bedding, clothes, toys, etc. will need to be supplied.

2.3 Children

Some satellite projects may be able to provide childcare services within the facility, although space restrictions, building design, and security measures may limit play activities.

2.4 Follow-Up Services

Some satellite projects may provide follow-up services for ex-residents of their facility. Because satellite projects operate out of permanent facilities they may encourage informal drop-in visits or weekly support group meetings.

CONCLUSION

Communities developing short term crisis accommodation projects may choose to offer a variety of services. These services may be developed by the accommodation project or may utilize services already existing within the community. When deciding what services should be included in the project, the needs of abused women, particularly in rural areas, should be considered. Projects should be organized to ensure the safety and security of their accommodations. Abused women's need for crisis intervention, emotional support, information, referral, transportation, counselling, medical, legal and financial assistance, and child care should be addressed by the project.

Safe home networks and satellite accommodations projects have the potential to meet the needs of abused women, providing the necessary protection and support services are provided. Each project should give consideration to the needs of abused women and the unique problems faced by each service delivery method, and develop their project according to their existing community services and support and the extent to which these needs and problems can be effectively addressed.

Appendix I

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

AND THEIR CHILDREN IN ALBERTA

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RESIDENTIAL SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN IN ALBERTA

1. Shelters

Alberta has fourteen shelters for abused women and their children. These are located in various regions of the province in primarily urban centres.*

The Provincial Government contributes to the funding of "essential services" in shelters which include food, clothing, shelter, emergency transportation, and staffing for counselling and child care programming. Staff provide crisis intervention counselling, emotional support information and referral services to abused women.

This ensures the provision of 24 hour, 7 day a week emergency care. Shelters also offer a variety of ancillary programs such as outreach, public education, research, volunteer co-ordinations, follow-up, groups for women or children and other services needed by residents or their communities. Community dollars are required to support these programs.

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* These include: Calgary, Camrose, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grand Centre, Grande Prairie, Hinton, Lethbridge, Lloydminster, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Sherwood Park.

2. Short Term Crisis Accommodation Projects

At present there are two safe home networks in Alberta which the author is aware of, one in High Level and one in Peace River. As well, the author is aware of the following satellite accommodation projects: Fairview and District Women's Resource Centre, Grande Cache Transition House Society, St. Paul and District Crisis Association, and Wellspring Women's Resource Centre in Whitecourt.[8]

At the time of writing, a formal policy position has not been developed by the Alberta Government concerning safe home networks or satellite projects, nor is there any uniform funding mechanism for these programs.

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[8] All of these programs have requested their services be published in the Directory of Initiatives, produced by the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, which outlines the programs and services in the province which address family violence.

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